

Monarda punctata Bee Balm, Horsemint¹

Edward F. Gilman and Terry Delvalle²

Introduction

Horsemint is a 12- to 18-inch-tall, upright, herbaceous perennial that has long been used by Native Americans to make a “sweating tea” (Fig. 1). The branched stems of this plant bear opposite, lanceolate to oblong leaves that are 3 inches in length. These light green leaves have serrate to nearly entire margins. Horsemint produces fragrant, beautiful pink flowers which are held above the foliage in the summer and fall. It is native to moist, coastal upland sites in Florida.



Figure 1. Bee balm

General Information

Scientific name: *Monarda punctata*

Pronunciation: moe-NAR-duh punk-TAY-tuh

Common name(s): bee balm, horsemint, monarda

Family: *Labiatae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: ground cover; edging

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

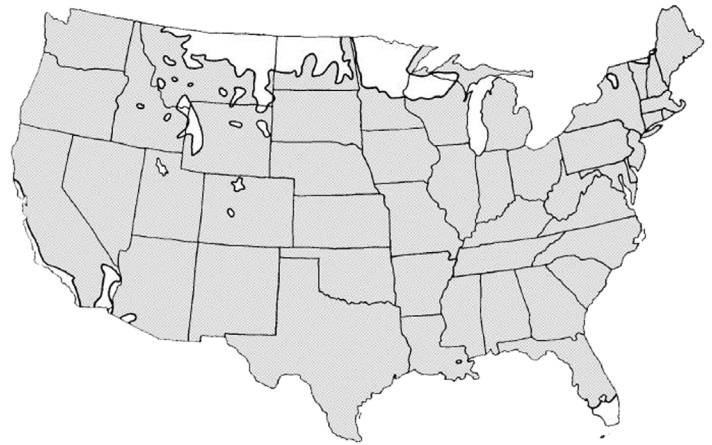


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 1 to 3 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; and Terry Delvalle, Extension agent; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate; ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink

Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

This herbaceous perennial may be used in the landscape as a summer ground cover in a small garden. It also presents a nice massed display in a perennial border.

Horsemint should be grown in full sun on a well-drained sandy soil with some moisture retentive capability. Provide occasional irrigation in drought if soil drains excessively. It is tolerant to some drought and is generally unscathed by freezing temperatures in Florida. *Monarda didyma* is sometimes grown in Florida but does not tolerate hot/humid conditions well. There are many other bee balms native to North and Central America.

Propagate *Monarda punctata* by division or from seed.

Pests and Diseases

The plant is tolerant of pests and diseases.